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Piecing it Together exhibition helps service users' recovery

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Collages designed by service users as part of an art therapy project have gone on display at St Pancras Hospital.

The Piecing it Together exhibition launched on Friday 29 April and the opening was attended by service users, staff and the general public.

Artist Alexa Wright, who curated the exhibition, led weekly workshops, funded with an Arts Council grant at two of the Trust's day centres – Daleham Gardens and Jules Thorn Day Hospital - for people who had experienced deterioration in their mental health.



The workshops enabled service users to use photo-collage as a direct, visual means to communicate recent experiences. Some people also continued to work with Alexa on a one-to-one basis to create small photo-text books.

The Piecing It Together exhibition brings together photographic documentation of a broad selection of the collages and the original books made during the project, as well as examples of Alexa Wright's own work.

Alexa said: "In this project, collage has proved to be a particularly helpful medium as, with little or no previous art experience, participants have been able to make visual narratives that reflect

something of their inner experiences, which are often difficult to articulate in any other way.”

Chief Executive, Angela McNab, who opened the exhibition said: “It is important to point out that what is so wonderful about art projects of this sort is that individuals do not need to have any special skill or previous experience to find this kind of activity useful in helping them to deal with, and in some cases recover from, a mental health problem.



Some of the images on display are accompanied by texts derived from statements by the project participants themselves. The stories behind these works reveal how mental illness is no different to physical illness in that it can take many different forms and can affect anyone at any time.

The Trust hosts four exhibitions a year which are overseen by Peter Herbert, curator of the Arts Project charity. Peter was responsible for planning the exhibition with support from Claire Johnston, the Trust’s Director of Nursing and Sandra McGee, our Head of Therapies.

Art therapy is a crucial part of the services we offer at the Trust and its use incorporates many of the Trust’s pledges contained in its new Clinical Strategy.*

Twenty percent of the profits from the exhibition which runs until July will be donated to the North London NHS Charitable Fund which supports the gallery.

Notes to Editors

*** Our Clinical Strategy**

At the heart of everything we do are the guiding principles contained in our new Clinical Strategy launched in March 2016. The ethos behind the Piecing it Together exhibition reflects the following pledges from the Clinical Strategy:

- we will co-produce with our service users and carers their treatment and support
- we will work in a recovery-orientated way
- we will improve access to our services for everyone regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and other protected characteristics

Find out more about our new Clinical Strategy

About Camden and Islington NHS Trust

We provide mental health and substance misuse services to people living in Camden and Islington, substance misuse services to Westminster, and a substance misuse and psychological therapies service to residents in Kingston.

We have two inpatient facilities, at Highgate Mental Health Centre and St Pancras Hospital, as well as community based services throughout the London boroughs of Camden and Islington. Our Trust is also a member of University College London Partners (UCLP), one of the world's leading academic health science partnerships.

We provide services for adults of working age, adults with learning difficulties, and older people in the London area either in a community or inpatient setting.

Our income for 2014/15 was £141million and we have approximately 1600 staff. Our staff work in multi-disciplinary teams providing a holistic approach to recovery. This means that we often work with partner agencies and the voluntary sector. Camden and Islington Mental Health and Social Care Trust was established in 2002. In March 2008 we became the first Care Trust to achieve Foundation Trust status and are licensed by Monitor.